

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-14

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 HA-05 IO-13 TRSE-00 CIAE-00
DODE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05
PA-01 SP-02 SS-15 ICA-11 /098 W
-----014403 310131Z /70

R 301613Z MAY 78
FM AMEMBASSY MONTEVIDEO
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6537
INFO AMEMBASSY BONN
AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY PARIS
AMEMBASSY ROME
AMEMBASSY THE HAGUE
AMEMBASSY STOCKHOLM
AMEMBASSY VIENNA
AMEMBASSY BERN

C O N F I D E N T I A L MONTEVIDEO 1762

E.O. 11652; GDS
TAGS: SHUM, UY
SUBJ: RECENT BELGIAN HUMAN RIGHTS VISIT

REF: (A) 77 MONTEVIDEO 5866 (B) ROME 9113 (NOTAL) (C) MONTEVIDEO 1763

1. ON 18 MAY A GROUP OF THREE PROMINENT BELGIANS COMPLETED A TWO-DAY HUMAN RIGHTS VISIT TO URUGUAY. THE MISSION, WHICH INCLUDED EX-MINISTER OF JUSTICE VERMEYLEN, SENATOR RYCKMANS AND RADIO-TELEVISION COMMENTATOR, S. HAUTFENNE, WERE TRAVELLING UNDER JOINT SPONSORSHIP OF THE BELGIAN HUMAN RIGHTS LEAGUE AND ANOTHER BELGIAN GROUP, THE COMMITTEE TO AID MIGUEL ANGEL ESTRELLA. THE LATTER IS A RENOWNED ARGENTINE PIANIST IMPRISONED IN URUGUAY SINCE LAST DECEMBER FOR HIS INVOLVEMENT WITH MEMBERS OF THE ARGENTINE MONTONERO SUBVERSIVE MOVEMENT (REF []).

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2. THE GROUP'S EFFORTS TO MEET WITH HIGH-LEVEL GOU OFFICIALS WERE COMPLETELY UNSUCCESSFUL DUE BOTH TO THE SHORTNESS OF THEIR VISIT (WHICH BRACKETED A LOCAL HOLIDAY) AND THE LACK OF PRE-ARRIVAL PROGRAMMING AND COORDINATION WITH THE GOU. THEY WERE ALSO UNSUCCESSFUL IN THEIR ATTEMPTS TO VISIT ESTRELLA. THE BELGIANS DID MANAGE TO

MEET WITH SEVERAL LEADERS OF URUGUAY'S QUOTE RECESSED UNQUOTE
POLITICAL PARTIES. THERE WERE ALSO BRIEFED ON USG HUMAN RIGHTS
POLICY BY DCM AND EMBASSY HUMAN RIGHTS OFFICER.

3. COMMENT: THIS IS THE SECOND GROUP WHICH HAS JOUR-
NEYED FROM EUROPE IN RECENT WEEKS. THE OTHER, AN
ITALIAN TRADE UNION DELEGATION, ALSO FAILED TO MAKE
MEANINGFUL GOU CONTACTS ON THE HUMAN RIGHTS SITUATION.
THE ITALIANS RETURNED HOME TO MAKE PUBLIC STATEMENTS (REF B)
DENOUNCING THE LEVEL OF OPPRESSION IN URUGUAY. THE BELGIAN
GROUP WILL LIKELY DO THE SAME. ALTHOUGH SUCH CRITICISM IS
RICHLY DESERVED BY THE GOU, PAST EXPERIENCE SUGGESTS THAT IT
WILL ONLY HAVE THE PERVERSE EFFECT OF STRENGTHENING THE
GOU' S MORE REACTIONARY ELEMENTS. BOTH VISITS HAD THE
POTENTIAL FOR A USEFUL POSITIVE IMPACT. UNFORTUNATELY,
THIS WAS LOST IN BOTH CASES THROUGH A LACK OF ADVANCE
GROUNDWORK. WE ARE ATTEMPTING TO MAKE THIS POINT TO OUR
LOCAL DIPLOMATIC COLLEAGUES FROM WESTERN EUROPEAN
MISSIONS (REF C).
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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 jan 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: HUMAN RIGHTS, VISITS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 30 may 1978
Decaption Date: 01 jan 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 20 Mar 2014
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1978MONTEV01762
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D780226-0680
Format: TEL
From: MONTEVIDEO
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1978/newtext/t1978058/aaaaages.tel
Line Count: 82
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: e1922aa2-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION ARA
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 77 MONTEVIDEO 5866, 78 ROME 9113, 78 MONTEVIDEO 1763
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 01 jun 2005
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 2751920
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: RECENT BELGIAN HUMAN RIGHTS VISIT
TAGS: SHUM, UY, BE
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odbc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/e1922aa2-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Sheryl P. Walter
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
20 Mar 2014
Markings: Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014